2:Purcell G-4 (no date) 1951 AL1 Southeast Asia AL1
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Sometimes they have been given a choice of activities. The Spanish, for example, wanted them as peasant agriculturists but tolerated them as traders. Similarly, in Indochina the French wanted them for opening up uncultivated lands, but, since the 'Red Lands' suitable for the cultivation of rubber and other profitable raw materials were barred to all aliens, the Chinese (although he might have been a peasant at home) refused the hard toil of the fields if he could obtain a position with a Chinese firm. In Java the Dutch found the Chinese useful as middlemen, and middlemen they became, accepting the penalty of the resentment of the Javanese that such a function entailed. The farming of the revenue was allotted to them as the highest bidders by the Spanish, the Dutch, and the British alike. Such occupations are labelled 'parasitic', but it must be remembered that they were the best methods of obtaining revenue available before the Governments felt themselves able to collect it for themselves. When they could do so, the farms were abolished. Also, it should be remembered, it was from the Chinese themselves that most of the revenue of the farms was collected. If we accept Mr Furnivall's epithet of 'parasitic' we must extend it to cover the British, Dutch, and French Governments also.

Given a large and improvident peasantry, as existed in Siam, Indonesia, Indochina, and the Philippines, there was a demand for credit with uncertain security or none at all. This credit was most naturally extended by the traders to whom they sold their produce, and it was most conveniently given in the form of goods and paid for in produce at the time of the harvest. Certainly this gave great power to the Chinese trader; the question is whether he abused it. A survey in Siam by Mr James M. Andrews (see p. 164) does not bear out the widespread belief that the Chinese are unconscionable usurers. 'The Thai farmer [says Mr Andrews], and especially his wife, is much more given to money-lending with the hope of high profits than the Chinese.' As regards alleged profiteering in the rice trade, the College of Agriculture at Los Baños in the Philippines (see p. 635) conducted a survey and found that 'the Chinese merchants are performing essential marketing services at a fairly low cost'. In Indonesia it is notorious that many Indonesian Hajis and Arabs are far greedier money-lenders than are the Chinese. In Malaya it is the chetty and the Sikh who are the money-lenders; not the Chinese. Cases in which Chinese